

# State college tuition could rise up to 15%

## Proposed formula up for vote Monday

By The Associated Press

Students at Kentucky's public universities could see their tuition bills rise by as much as 15 percent next year, depending on how much lawmakers put into the state budget for higher education.

The Council on Postsecondary Education made calculations based on a proposed formula that is set for a vote on Monday. The formula is part of the council's plan to better control tuition rates, rather than let schools set them individually.

At the University of Kentucky, tuition could go up as much as \$888 in the 2006-07 academic year for in-state undergraduates, a 15.1 percent increase. At the University of Louisville, the hike could be as much as \$851, a 15.4 percent increase.

State regional universities could increase tuition as much as 13.8 percent, and community colleges as much as 9.5 percent under the proposal.

The final figure depends on what is in the state budget.

The council asked for a \$69 million increase in higher education funding. Gov. Ernie Fletcher proposed an increase of \$20 million for colleges and universities for 2006-07 over the \$978 million the schools are spending this year.

The maximum tuition rates calculated by the council could take effect if the legislature fails to increase base higher education spending by at least \$34.5 million.

Fletcher's budget proposal has been referred to the House, which could add money for public colleges and universities. The Senate will take up the budget after the House.

The new policy allows schools to set the rates, but they must not exceed the maximum set by the council, and they are subject to council approval. The two goals are to keep schools affordable and to ensure schools have enough money to operate and improve, said Sandy Woodley, the council's vice president for finance.

Bill Brammell, a U of L senior and student government president, and other student leaders said they have begun lobbying lawmakers. At U of L, students have been phoning and writing legislators, he said, and about 60 students are scheduled to visit the Capitol next month to argue for increased higher education spending.

"It's hard, looking at what has happened in the last few years, to be optimistic," Brammell said.

"We're pushing for more money for higher education, which we generally think makes higher education more affordable," said Jason Marion, the student government president at Morehead State University and chairman of the Kentucky Board of Student Body Presidents.

Since 2001, the state's eight public universities and its community and technical college

system have set their own tuition rates, with council approval only a formality.

Over that period, tuition at UK and U of L has risen by 64 percent, or an average of \$2,225, according to the council. Increases over that period averaged \$2,146 at the six regional universities, or 84 percent, and \$1,122, or 91 percent, at the state's community and technical colleges, the council said.

Should the legislature provide at least half of the council request, U of L would be limited to a \$503 increase (9.1 percent) in 2006-07 under the proposal. UK would be limited to a \$526 increase (8.9 percent) under the proposal.

Tuition increases for the regional universities and community colleges would be 8.3 percent or less under the proposal.

In 2004, Western Kentucky University regents adopted tuition increases of about 5 percent each year over the next two years, contingent on state funding. But President Gary Ransdell said he may seek to revise that if the legislature adopts Fletcher's higher education budget proposal.

"Up until last week we were dedicated to single-digit tuition increases for the next two years, but the numbers in the executive budget make that precarious," Ransdell said.